

Roots, Rock, Rebbe: Matisyahu and the Cultural Version

BY WILLIAM J. LEVAY
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The most exciting thing happening in music today is Matisyahu.
- Carson Daly

Matisyahu is reggae's newest and most unorthodox luminary.
- *Blender*

When I first heard about Matisyahu I was sitting on a secondhand couch in my living room, surrounded by sections of the Sunday *New York Times*. Black Uhuru's 1979 roots reggae classic *Showcase* was on the stereo. It was late March 2004, and I was living in State College, Pennsylvania, in a town house about a mile away from Penn State's main campus. When my college friend and housemate Trent came downstairs and heard the music, it reminded him of a flyer he saw downtown.

"Hey, Bill," he said. "There's this Hasidic Jewish guy who sings reggae playing the Crowbar this week."

"Interesting," I said, as the unorthodox mental image came into focus. Trent walked over to the dining room table, where he opened his messenger bag and pulled out a copy of the *Daily Collegian*, Penn State's student newspaper. He turned to the Arts section and pointed to the article. The singer was called Matisyahu and his local concert was sponsored by Penn State's Chabad Jewish Student Organization; though the writer highlighted the singer's talent, he billed the upcoming performance as a primarily Jewish event. "We hope to attract some Jewish

students who wouldn't necessarily come to a more religious event," Rabbi Nosson Meretsky, director of Chabad at Penn State, was quoted as saying.¹ As a reggae fan I was curious about his sound, but not being Jewish, nor in any way connected to Jewish student life, I was not compelled to attend the show.

Months later I was living on Staten Island and studying at New York University. On December 11, 2004, I came across an article in the Saturday *New York Times* that featured a large color photograph of Matisyahu, in full beard, fedora, wire-rimmed glasses, black suit, and *tzitzit*, crouching onstage in front of a drum kit, clutching his mic like a rapper or a dancehall deejay. I immediately connected this striking image with the singer I had heard about months prior. The *New York Times* writer, unlike the author of the short *Collegian* piece, contextualized the artist as part of a broader alternative Jewish music scene in New York, including rappers and DJs; but Matisyahu, singing and rapping passionately about his faith, dressed in traditional Chabad-Lubavitch garb, was the stand-out star in more ways than one.² Fusing down-tempo, pulsating, bass-heavy reggae grooves, dancehall and hip-hop sing-rapping, beat-boxing, extended jam band guitar solos, and Hasidic wordless vocal tunes, or *niggun*, Matisyahu and his band have hit upon a sound that is attracting high-profile praise and establishing Matisyahu as "more than just a novelty," as the Associated Press announced in a recent write-up.³

The *Daily Collegian* article was titled, "Uncommon Denominator: Matisyahu brings unorthodox sound." A *New York Post* article declared: "Reggae singer has unorthodox roots." The *Daily News*: "An unorthodox mix: rap and religion." Since

early 2004, journalists have been riffing on the word "orthodox" and its antonym in their pieces about Matisyahu. To talk about the Lubavitcher in such terms is an obvious yet effective play on words, as it signals some widely felt tension between what Matisyahu represents (to others) and what he himself claims to be representing (representin'); but with so many news articles weighing in, the device is bordering on cliché. With that caveat, I will proceed cautiously with my own "orthodox" riff.

Orthodox is rooted in the Greek *orthos*, meaning straight or right, and *doxa*, meaning opinion.⁴ Lowercase *orthodox* has come to mean "conventional," while *Orthodox* signifies a religious sect that adheres to strict doctrine, one that is more "traditional" than most. An Orthodox Jew singing reggae and rapping at bars and clubs—but not on Friday nights—is an unorthodox notion. When we begin to consider how Matisyahu is engaging with concepts of diaspora—the Jewish diaspora with which he identifies, the African diaspora from which he borrows musically—the orthodox/unorthodox tension highlights more subtle and interesting diasporic issues than the iconic, in-your-face kind evoked by the popular press. When Matthew Miller embraced the Chabad-Lubavitch lifestyle and became Matisyahu, he chose a path that made him an exotic Other in the eyes of a majority of Americans—Orthodox yet unorthodox. American Hasidim, more visibly than other Jews, hold on to everyday traditions, recreating with each generation a "changing same" identity— 21st-century American yet 18th-century Eastern European. Lubavitchers, more so than other Hasidim, engage in outreach programs and use the Internet to spread their message (www.chabad.org)—again, Orthodox yet unorthodox. Thus, in

this sense, Matisyahu's campaign of outreach, not to convert but to bring Jewish spirituality to the dancehall through live performance, the living room through MTV, or anywhere through his fans' iPods, is a novel version of an orthodox Lubavitch idea. The hybrid, cultural-versioning character of Matisyahu's music is particularly normal within communities that identify with a diaspora. And singing about Exodus and Zion over a reggae beat is rather orthodox as well.

Cultural studies scholar Dick Hebdige writes about "versioning" in *Cut 'n' Mix*:

One of the most important words in reggae is "version." Sometimes a reggae record is released and literally hundreds of different versions of the same rhythm or melody will follow in its wake. Every time a version is released, the original tune will be slightly modified. A musician will play a different solo on a different instrument, use a different tempo, key or chord sequence. A singer will place the emphasis on different words or will add new ones. A record producer will use a different arrangement. An engineer will stretch the sounds into different shapes, add sound effects, take out notes and chords or add new ones, creating empty spaces by shuffling the sequence of sounds into new patterns.⁵

Defined broadly, to do a *version* is to quote something in a creative way. Remembering, and repeating past cultural expressions in new contexts is a creative, transformative process. "After all," writes literary critic James Snead, "people have by now had to make peace with the idea that the world is not inexhaustible in its combinations, nor life in its various guises...let us remember that, whenever we encounter repetition in cultural forms, we are indeed not viewing 'the same thing' but its transformation."⁶

Matisyahu is part of the "disjointed but publicly grouped series of [Jewish] artists who express themselves using rap and hip-hop conventions"—musicians that ethnomusicologist Judah Cohen describes as "representative of the larger radical Jewish music scene in that they are predominantly male, they are conversant with

musical genres commonly associated with blackness, and they take pains to situate themselves on the margins of Jewish expression under the claims that they are challenging a complacent Jewish tradition."⁷ These artists, like many people who see themselves as part of a diaspora, challenge and reinvent traditions by versioning old ones. They move forward and innovate by remembering and transforming past expressions through creative repetition and reinvention in the present. Understanding how Matisyahu is versioning Jewish expression, how his unique cultural repertoire enables him to express his faith in a new and increasingly popular way, will further elucidate the orthodox/unorthodox tension Matisyahu evokes in the context of diaspora.

Diaspora and the Cultural Version

On April 17, 2005, I saw Matisyahu and his band perform for a sold-out crowd at Manhattan's Irving Plaza. The four-piece—Matisyahu, the only Hasidim in the band, at center stage; Aaron Dugan on guitar, stage left; Josh Werner, the bassist, sporting a pork-pie hat at stage right; and Jonah David, on drums behind the singer—played in front of a large, golden, neo-hippie tapestry featuring a radiating Star of David. By the third song of the set, Matisyahu had the largely Jewish, mostly white audience bouncing in time with his infectious roots-reggae style grooves. As a coda to "Chop 'em Down," the first track on Matisyahu's 2004 debut release, *Shake Off the Dust... Arise*, the band softly vamped on a syncopated rhythm common to modern dancehall reggae, a 4/4 groove with accents on beats one, the and of two,

and four. After rapidly rhyming a version of the Exodus story, Matisyahu spoke over the vamp: "See like this now, y'all. We happen to be in the month of Nissan." The crowd erupted in positive acknowledgment. "And y'all knew this is the month of redemption; this is the month of redemption, the month that when the Jews were in Egypt they were redeemed from Israel. And this will be the month of our redemption too, y'know." Another explosion of shouts and applause followed as the band broke the vamp and closed the song.

To anyone even somewhat familiar with the work of Bob Marley and the Wailers, talk of exodus and redemption over steady, driving yet down-tempo bass



Matisyahu and his band perform at Irving Plaza in front of a radiating Star of David. (William J. Levay)

and drum patterns and staccato guitar upstrokes is nothing new. What is new (and Matisyahu is not the first to do this) is an artist taking this music readily associated

with the spirituality and frustrations of impoverished black Jamaicans, and re-sounding it from a contemporary Orthodox-Jewish perspective, for a Jewish audience, in a sense reconnecting the African-diasporic music to its Jewish diasporic roots. This cross-diasporic borrowing is a result of complex historical circumstance that happened to converge in Matisyahu's cultural repertoire.

Matisyahu was born Matthew Miller in West Chester, Pennsylvania in 1979. He was raised in a non-Orthodox Jewish household in White Plains, New York, where as a teen he embraced hip-hop and reggae. Matisyahu told *MTV News*: "I used to listen to Bob Marley and Sizzla and Buju Banton. I used to go everywhere listening to that music. I'd walk around with headphones on, skateboard with headphones on. That music made its mark...And then about four years ago, I made a decision to become religious, because I was always trying to find a path, and I figured, 'Let me check into my roots,' and I found a way to access a place that I was trying to get to for a while."⁸ "In a strange way, reggae music was the connection to my Judaism...As a teenager, growing up, trying to figure out who I was, I kept seeing and hearing Jewish things on reggae records—like the Star of David or the words 'Zion' and 'Israel.'"⁹ The paths, the routes Matisyahu used to connect with his roots, were reggae and *Chassidus* (Hasidic doctrine). As he explained to a *New York Post* reporter, "The Rastas had a strong connection to the Old Testament, and they incorporated that into their music...Now what I'm doing is taking their music and incorporating it into religion."¹⁰ More accurately, he is *reincorporating* reggae into religion, or incorporating reggae into *his* religion.

Roots reggae was the dominant popular music in Jamaica from the late 1960s through the 1970s. It is steeped in, and largely shaped by, Rasta ideology. Rastafari is a messianic religion (Rasta expert Leonard Barrett calls it a cult) which holds that Haile Selassie I (né Ras Tafari), the late emperor of Ethiopia, was God (Jah) incarnate. In the context of black nationalistic movements in the United States and elsewhere, the Marcus Garvey-inspired Rasta refrain "Back to Africa" held popular appeal as black Jamaicans increasingly saw themselves as part of a greater African diaspora. Narratives of the slavery experience, often couched in Biblical imagery, were forced into the national discourse with great help from Jamaican musicians, producers, and sound system operators. In the early 1970s, this discourse went international with the success of Bob Marley and the Wailers in the U.S. and U.K. markets.



Wackie's is a roots reggae record label. The Lion of Judah and Star of David images are typical of Rasta-influenced reggae. (© Wackies)

Marley's version of reggae, and that of the scene from which he sprang, was an articulation of diasporic remembering, a *reinvention* of history that was simultaneously rooted in an

imagined past and in the very real present of "concrete jungles" and postcolonial institutionalized racism. Ultimately, it does not matter that the great black exodus to the promised land of Ethiopia never occurred. The cultural versioning that took place affected Jamaican political discourse, and through international media

structures, the roots reggae sound and vision was disseminated far and wide. This sound and vision included, of course, the Old Testament stories, Psalms, and images, the apocalyptic predictions of Revelations, and the projection of spirituality and strength that characterized the Rastafari movement.

Here we have the written history of the Jews, having been disseminated by colonialists and missionaries, being versioned by an African diasporic group in Jamaica to subvert political authority. This version gains popular currency and is disseminated by the descendants of the same capitalistic forces that enslaved Africans. Eventually a young man named Matthew Miller hears this version and decides to re-version it, subverting traditional Jewish expression and gaining pop cultural currency himself. While this sketch of cultural borrowing is rather crude, my point is that the process of versioning culture is an orthodox aspect of diasporic cultures, and that certain historical events facilitate cross-diasporic borrowing.

Anthropologist James Clifford writes that all diasporas

...begin with uprooting and loss. They are familiar with exile, with the "outsider's" exposed terror—of police, lynch mob, and pogrom. At the same time, diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, "customizing" and "versioning" them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations.¹¹

We can see this versioning in any number of diasporic cultures and expressions: in the traditional yet Internet-savvy Chabad-Lubavitch community; in Matisyahu's Jewish reggae; in hip-hop's radical cutting and remixing of sound. Matisyahu understands the creative remembering that enables identity formation. Recall his

invocation of redemption in the month of Nissan during the Irving Plaza performance, and note this verse from "Warrior":

Like an ancient memory
Remember how it used to be
Close your eyes and breathe in
The scent of freedom
Ringing across the sea
Land of milk and honey
One day we'll wake up from this dream
And stop sleeping...
Then we'll see clearly.¹²

Matisyahu is recasting the stories and ideas he learned in yeshiva in a vernacular hip-hop/reggae style that reads quickly and easily with young modern Jews, his primary audience. Through his hybridization of Jewish and black expressions, Matisyahu is able to convey his message of spirituality, to reach out to non-Orthodox Jews as do his fellow Lubavitchers, in a new way.

In *The Black Atlantic*, cultural-studies scholar Paul Gilroy relates cultural versioning with what LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) calls the "changing same."

In his 1966 piece, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," Jones writes:

[Rhythm and Blues] is contemporary and has changed, as jazz has remained the changing same. Fresh Life. R&B has gone through evolution, as its singers have, gotten "modern," taken things from jazz, as jazz has taken things from R&B. New R&B takes things from old blues, gospel, white popular music, instrumentation, harmonies (just as these musics have in turn borrowed) and made these diverse elements its own.¹³

According to Gilroy's version of the term, the *changing same* also describes the cultures of the African diaspora in which "new traditions have been invented in the jaws of modern experience, and new conceptions of modernity produced in the long shadow of our enduring traditions—the African ones and the ones forged from the

slave experience that the black vernacular so powerfully and actively remembers."¹⁴ The cut 'n' mix, versioning, changing-same character of African-diasporic cultural expression is a reflection of a culture whose history is non-linear and discontinuous, one whose members actively re-signify the cultural elements they encounter, making those elements their own.

As I mentioned above, the Hasidic community lives a highly visible changing sameness, retaining cultural forms that date to the start of the Hasidic movement, in 18th-century Eastern Europe, and which seem greatly distanced (in the view of outsiders) from newer cultural elements like the use of cell phones or the Internet. Yet, like the African diasporic groups Gilroy is writing about, these Jewish diasporic groups similarly incorporate the new by versioning the old. In fact, Hasidism was founded by Jews discontented with both rabbinic Judaism, which had become increasingly academic, and radical Jewish mysticism,¹⁵ thus adopting some elements of each. And Matisyahu versions the teachings of Hasidism for his audiences. On his most recent CD, *Live at Stubb's*, Matisyahu says:

See like this, you know. Chassidus explains that everything in this world, everything in this life has a inner essence, a inner soul, you know. And when it started out, before the soul was reincarnated into this life, into this body and time and place that we find ourselves, it was basking above in the rays of godliness, y'know. And it comes into this world for one reason, y'know. That it should transform the darkness into light. It should take the darkness of this world and make it light, yessuh.¹⁶

He's stating a rather profound principle in a rather youthful way, littered with "y'knows," and with a streetwise, hip-hop inflection in his voice. After this speech he launches into an improvised *niggun*, and the audience shouts and applauds. Matisyahu's music and his message, while a current fascination of popular culture at

large, with a growing audience of Jews and non-Jews, does not appeal to some. A look at some Matisyahu non-fans will further evince the tensions he evokes.

Jewish Reggae?

"That's not real reggae," Ira Heaps told me, slightly shaking his head. I knew what Ira was getting at. Matisyahu's brand of reggae is an American, rock- and hip-hop-inflected kind, adorned with extended guitar solos (which isn't surprising considering Matisyahu dropped out of high school and followed the famous jam band Phish as they toured the country) and able beat-boxing. Ira earns his living selling "real" Jamaican reggae as the owner of Jammyland Music—"New York's Complete Source for Reggae"—a reggae record shop/recording studio/record label/production company located on East Third Street in Manhattan.

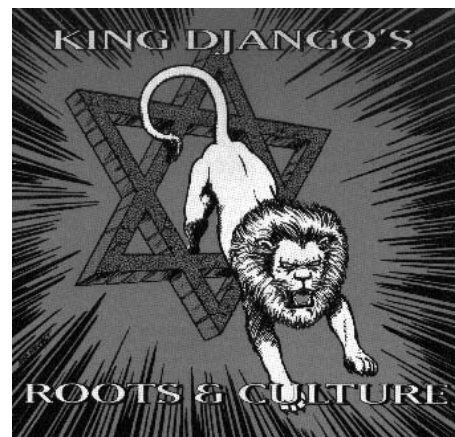
We were at the NYC Ska Festival, at the back of a basement club in the Meatpacking District where the merchandise tables were set up—T-shirts and CDs were on display near the men's room. Sitting near Ira was Jeff Baker, aka King Django, a central figure in the New York ska scene from its infancy in the 1980s through its peak at the end of the 1990s. In 1998, Django released *Roots and Culture*, an expression of his Eastern European Jewish heritage through the musical languages he knows best—ska and reggae. His vocals, in English and Yiddish, float atop ska-klezmer fusions and down-tempo roots and dub reggae grooves. It was, in Django's view, just a side project until trumpeter/composer Frank London encouraged him to get a band together and perform *Roots and Culture* live. Despite

Django's stature in the New York ska/reggae scene, his work has never attracted the attention of the popular media the way Matisyahu's has. Perhaps this tension was a motivation for Django's comment to me that Matisyahu's rise in popularity had something to do with financial backers with "deep pockets." Django felt that Lubavitchers and the wider Jewish community were pushing for Matisyahu's success because he is a "nice Jewish boy who's hip with the kids."

Coming from a Jew, and an artist who had produced his own Jewish-reggae version at that, this struck me as rather unorthodox, considering the Jewish stereotype that Django implied. My impression of Django's comments was that, in his view, Matisyahu was a novelty, not a serious reggae musician nor a serious Jewish musician, and that by being heavily promoted and assisted by Jewish powers-that-be, he was lacking in do-it-yourself credibility which Django holds in high esteem.

Django, then, had no problem with the idea of a Jew borrowing from African diasporic music—he

did just that with *Roots and Culture*, indeed with his whole career as a ska/reggae artist. Frank London has expressed his philosophy that every musical style has rules, and these rules can be identified and learned. In a piece titled "An Insider's View," London writes that "one can study and assimilate the elements of *any* musical style, form, or tradition by ear. You listen over and over to a Charlie Parker solo or a



Django's album cover reclaims the Star of David and the Lion of Judah.
(©1998 Stubborn Records)

Peruvian flute player and learn to replicate what you hear...No music [is] off-limits."¹⁷ However, some people, sensitive to the political relationships that underscore cultural borrowing, express discomfort or disdain for certain kinds of cultural versioning. On the website of JDub Records, the company that released Matisyahu's debut CD, and "a non-profit record and event production company striving to build community through new and innovative Jewish music and cross cultural musical dialogue" (www.jdubrecords.org), "rinah" posted this message on March 2, 2005:

Reggae and hip hop are by no means a historically or culturally jewish art-form and by taking them on and participating in them as if they were our own is racist. We as jews wouldn't take on gospel music or islamic praying as it would be totally inappropriate religiously and racially, so why should it be ok if some wealthy trustafarian from the suburbs takes on the religious music of rastafarians, showing a complete lack of respect for the resistance movement that fought the colonial powers in Jamaica, and the black nationalist movement that is politically linked to the [music].

As a jew I know where my roots stand and while I can show solidarity with resistance movements for justice around the world, I find it quite disrespectful to reggae in all its forms when the only reggae artists that white people support are Bob Marley, John Brown's Body, Matis Yahu and other white artists participating in a Jamaican resistance-art form. White people have been stealing from people of color for years, whether it be labor, land, or culture, it is all the same wrong.

Obviously, for some, Matisyahu's version of reggae is not unorthodox nor subversive nor inauthentic, but downright disrespectful to blacks and antithetical to the political philosophy sounded through reggae. For the many fans at the Irving Plaza performance in April, however, this borrowing posed no problem. They came in droves to enjoy Matisyahu (and perhaps relieve tension) in a rather orthodox way—by dancing.

Holding onto Identity

One of the most exciting moments of Matisyahu's Irving Plaza performance happened during the last song before the encore, "King Without a Crown." The audience was receptive throughout the show, but at this point the excitement was palpable. As Aaron Dugan launched into a rock guitar solo, Jonah David laid into his crash cymbals, strobes pulsed, spotlights pivoted and spun, throwing beams of light onto the crowd, and a young male Lubavitcher climbed onstage and started bouncing in time to the beat. At center stage he faced Matisyahu, they joined hands and began jumping and turning in a clockwise circle dance. The crowd screamed its approval. A Jewish teen wearing a yarmulke was crowd-surfed onto the stage. Unsure of what to do next, he stood at the edge of the stage, looked to his friends and shrugged questioningly. They waved him on, he turned around and seamlessly joined the circle dance. In a friendly gesture, Matisyahu, who was now only wearing a *kippah*, grabbed his fellow Lubavitcher's fedora and placed it on his own head. As a result of the doffing, that fan's yarmulke fell to the stage; while continuing to jump in the circle he awkwardly bent down to grab it. Another young male fan climbed onto the stage and joined the dance. The Lubavitcher fan struggled to balance his *kippah* on his head while at the same time holding hands in the circle dance. He kept up this struggle, jumping out of time, grabbing hands, then dropping them again as he felt his yarmulke fall, until the guitar solo ended and the fans exited the stage so Matisyahu could close the set. He walked offstage, hand on yarmulke on head.

As I replayed this scene from the video I shot, I sympathized with the young man. He couldn't leave his yarmulke on the stage while he danced, nor could he stick it in his pocket and put it on after the dance. That piece of cloth was part of the young man's identity, probably on a religious level, definitely on a more mundane, everyday level. It was unorthodox for this Orthodox Jew to be jumping up and down to reggae music on the Irving Plaza stage. His response to the fallen yarmulke was to grab it quickly and cover his head, even if it interrupted the flow of the circle dance, even if audience members like me felt slightly embarrassed for him. He was, from my point of view, literally holding onto his identity in an unorthodox situation, navigating new cultural terrain while maintaining a true north.

Similarly, Matisyahu holds onto his identity—that of a devout Jew, conversant in hip-hop and reggae, with good vocal chops—in the unorthodox limelight of popular culture, and refuses to be "just a novelty." He is doing well so far. With a new album on Or Records, the label of Los Lonely Boys, a group that recently scored a *Billboard* hit, a lot of publicity, including an Associated Press article, appearances on Carson Daly's and Jimmy Kimmel's late night shows, and VH1's *Best Week Ever*, Matisyahu is poised to break into the mainstream, certainly an unorthodox situation for an Orthodox Jew. Another unorthodox situation: Matisyahu was one of the headliners at last summer's 8th Annual Reggae Carifest, along with dancehall luminaries Buju Banton, Capleton, and Luciano. Matisyahu's is the only white face on the flyer. How was Matisyahu received by the largely Afro-Caribbean and



Matisyahu (far left) was the only white headliner at the 8th Annual Reggae Carifest.
(©2004-2005 Reggae Carifest)

African American audience? According to *New York Times* pop critic Kelefa Sanneh, Matisyahu "managed to inspire a few cheers, but by the end of his set the crowd had grown quiet."¹⁸ Despite this lukewarm reception from the dancehall crowd, many people are listening. Part of Matisyahu's appeal, beyond the initial unorthodox-novelty thrill, is the sincerity of his expressions; his cultural versions stem from his identity, his unique cultural repertoire. To Matisyahu, his music is a natural result of his influences, musical and religious.

The recent media buzz around Matisyahu is a result of the tension between what Matisyahu says he represents and what American popular culture sees him as representing, that is, between a 25-year-old's sincere Jewish spirituality set to a

capable reggae beat, and an exotic Other who's *actually* a good singer—and, gee, he can beat-box too! The orthodox/unorthodox tension that Matisyahu evokes—again, what makes him an interesting pop culture phenomenon—is a tension between the everyday cultural versioning that actually occurs among people who identify with a diasporic community and the expectation of a majority of Americans, and perhaps some in the wider Jewish community, that Hasidim live an unchanging lifestyle. It is a tension between those like London who feel that any music is fair game for versioning, and those like "rinah" who understand sound, especially reggae, to be inextricably linked to racial politics, and therefore off limits to Jews or any whites. It is a tension between covering your head or grabbing hands and joining in the dance. Cultural versioning enables people to resolve tensions between old cultural expressions and the new, but those versions, in turn, may find themselves in tension with other expressions or situations. I think that young Lubavitcher had the right idea: keep your head covered, but join in the dance as best you can.

¹ Paul Thompson, "Uncommon Denominator: Matisyahu Brings Unorthodox Sound," *Daily Collegian*, 25 March 2004.

² Diane Cardwell, "Yo! Or is it Oy? Cultures Blend in Dance Clubs," *New York Times*, 11 December 2004, B1.

³ Nekesa Mumbi Moody, "Hasidic Reggae Star Proving More Than Just a Novelty," *Associated Press*, 21 April 2005.

⁴ "Orthodox," *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵ Dick Hebdige, *Cut'n'Mix: Culture, Identity, and Caribbean Music* (London: Routledge, 1987), 12.

⁶ James A. Snead, "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture," *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Methuen, 1984), 59.

⁷ Judah Cohen, "Hebe-Hop, Radical Jewish Culture, and the Politics of Enfranchisement," (Presented at SEM conference, 2004), 2.

⁸ James Montgomery, "Straight Outta West Chester? Meet Hasidic Hip-Hopper Matisyahu," *MTV News*, 31 March 2005, <http://www.vh1.com/artists/news/1499390/03312005/matisyahu.jhtml>

⁹ Matt Wayne, "Spiritually Sound," *Centre Daily Times*, 26 March 2004.

¹⁰ Lisa Keys, "Hasid Trip: Reggae Singer Has Unorthodox Roots," *New York Post*, 7 May 2004, p. 56.

¹¹ James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 263.

¹² Matisyahu, "Warrior," *Shake Off the Dust... Arise*, (JDub Records, 2004).

¹³ LeRoi Jones, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," *Black Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988), 203.

¹⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 101.

¹⁵ "Hasidic Judaism," *Wikipedia*, 2005, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism

¹⁶ Matisyahu, *Live at Stubb's*, (Or Records, 2005).

¹⁷ Frank London, "An Insider's View: How We Traveled From Obscurity to the Klezmer Establishment in Twenty Years," *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots*, ed. Mark Slobin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 206.

¹⁸ Kelefa Sanneh, "A Day of Roots, Dancehall and No-Shows," *New York Times*, 12 July 2005.